The Local Issues for Sălaj/Szilagyi County, 1945 by Roger Morrell

Introduction

The preparation of this article was prompted by **Judy Kennett**, who provided me with a copy of a short item published in *The Cinderella Philatelist* in April 1964 entitled "Rumanian Local Posts: The Second Issue of Posta Sălajului" by I. Micu, translated with abridgements by J.L.N. Best [1]. I thought that since neither this stamp issue, nor indeed the "first issue", has appeared in *SoH*, it would be useful to prepare a slightly expanded version to bring readers up to speed. It would also complement the Odorheiu article that was republished in *SoH* No. 163, December 2005, as well as the postal stationery card article in *SoH* No. 156, March 2004. However, information on the first, overprinted issue was much harder to track down, since very little appears to have been published in English. Judy Kennett put me in touch with **Calin Marinescu**, who kindly provided a copy of a second article by Iosef Micu [5]. However, for much of the detail below I am extremely grateful to **Jay T. Carrigan** [4] from the USA who provided me with much information on his sources, as well as many of the pictures with which this article is illustrated. This I most gratefully acknowledge. Finally, Judy sent me copies of pages from a specialist Romanian catalogue [6] which gives some more information of forgeries. Many thanks to all these helpers!

Historical background

The Hungarian takeover of parts of Romania during the Second World War is well known. However, by October 1944, the Hungarian Administration was forced to leave Northern Transylvania as a result of the westward movement of the Russian army, assisted by the Romanian army. Initially the area was Russian controlled, but the Romanian authorities completed their takeover by 9 April 1945. In some areas, the Romanian postal authorities took over the postal services very soon after their initial liberation, but in others they were run for a short period by the local authorities, and these services ran independently of each other. These included:

Romanian name:	*Hungarian name:*
Năsăud county	Naszód county
Odorheui	Székelyudvarhely
Oradea	Nagyvárad
Sălaj county, main town Zalău	Szilágy county, main town Zilah
Sighetu Marmatiei	Máramossziget
Tirgu Mures	Marosvásárhely

and their locations are shown in the map in **Figure 1**.

In Năsăud county, only a single local stamp was produced. In Odorheiu, Hungarian stamps and postal stationery were overprinted, as well as rubber surcharge handstamps. In Oradea and in Sălaj County, Hungarian stamps and special local issues were used. In Sighetu Marmatiei, Hungarian stamps were overprinted, while in Tirgu Mures, Romanian stamps were overprinted. None of these issues appears in the mainstream catalogues. Only the overprinted Hungarian issues are listed in David Miles' book. However, both overprints and special local issues regularly appear in specialist auctions and make an interesting if somewhat expensive sideline collection for both Hungarian and Romanian collectors.

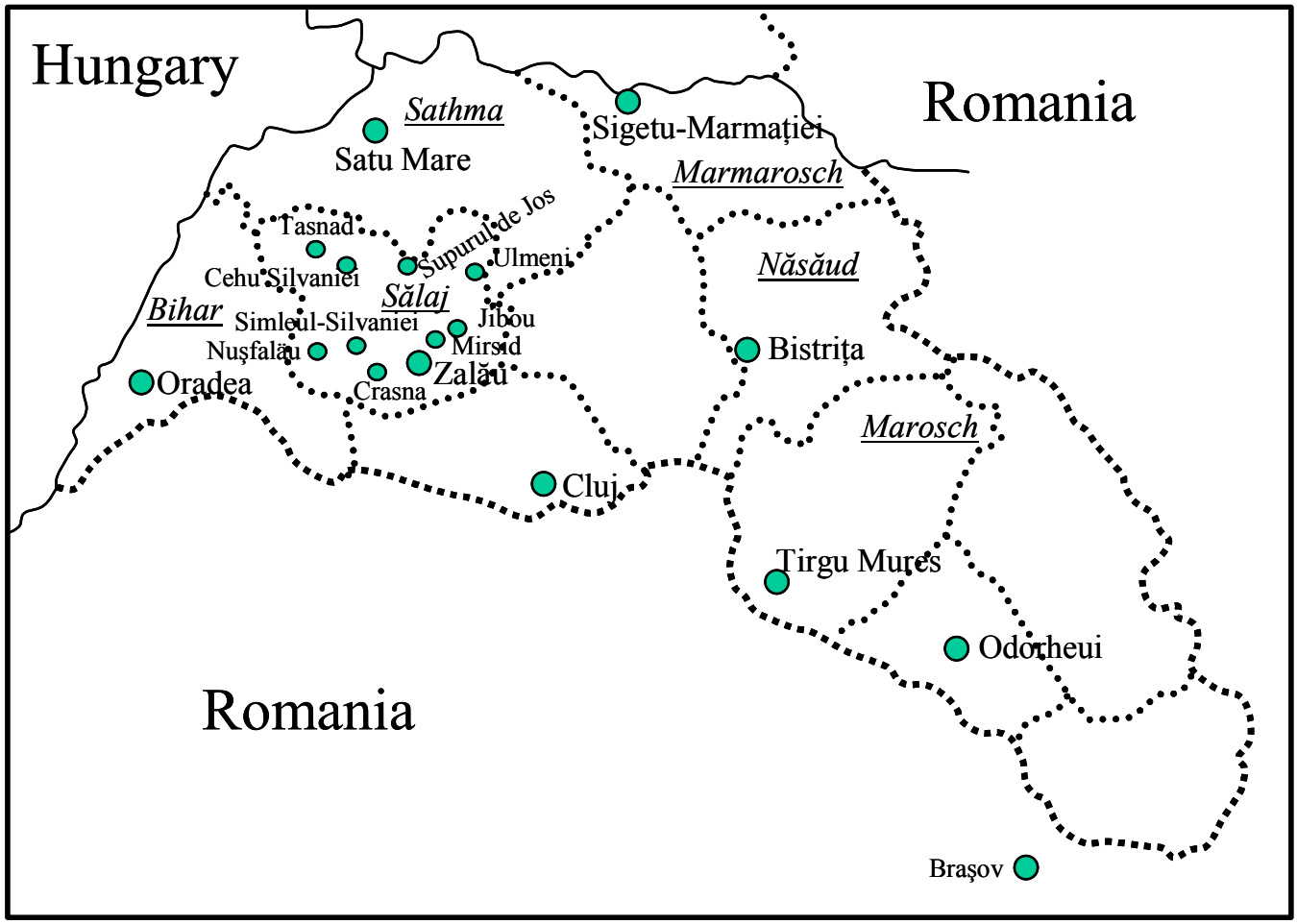


Figure 1: *Sketch-map of Northern Transylvania and location of towns with local issues.*

The Sălaj First Issue

The first issue was prepared by overprinting Hungarian stamps, mainly the low value historical figures definitive set issued in 1943 (SG 732-45, 785, Michel 705-16, 736-740, 753, 785), with a new value of 1 *P*, 2 *P*, 3 *P* or 5 *P* above the words 'Posta Sălajului' in two lines. The 2 *P* Horthy definitive was overprinted 5 *P*, and postage due stamps (between SG D684 and D696, Michel P144 and P158) were similarly treated, but only with 3 *P* and 5 *P.*

Figure 2: *The overprinted and surcharged issue.*

Figure 2 (cont.): *The overprinted and surcharged issue.*

Figure 2 (cont.): *The overprinted and surcharged issue.*

A total of 66 stamps is given in David Miles' book [2], but there is no text exploring the issue in more detail. The stamps are illustrated in **Figure 2** from my own recently acquired collection, which includes the 1944 Red Cross Fund set. These are not listed by David Miles. What is particularly noteworthy is the huge variability in the typeface employed, particularly in the surcharge value and its position relative to the two lines of

text. It is this sort of situation that makes identification of genuineness or forgery particularly difficult.

Anxious to find out more, I have been hunting for articles, and so far found nothing in English, but a search of the internet reveals two useful websites for further information [3, 4]. Further correspondence with Jay T. Carrigan [4] allows me to complete the story.

This issue first appeared on February 12, 1945. Printing records were kept only according to the denomination of the overprint, not the original stamp, and the following **Table 1** gives numbers understood to have come from the county finance administration [5]:

Table 1: Numbers issued

Surcharge value	**1 *P***	**2 *P***	**3 *P***	**5 *P***
Total Printing:	4,400	10,000	2,103	945
Destroyed:	1,284	3,921	1,013	423
Sold at Post Offices:	3,116	6,079	1,090	522

The stamps were overprinted in half-sheets of 50 stamps (25 for large format stamps), using stocks gathered up from county post offices. Insufficient quantities of large-size type gave rise to different types of the letter 'P' and of the numerals of value. Incomplete sheets, blocks, and even single stamps were pasted together to form printing "sheets". Since such pasted up sheets usually contained different basic stamps, not every type of overprint can be found on every stamp. (Perhaps this explains the corner paper adhesion on some of my stamps?)

Table 2: Listing of overprinted stamps

Value	**Printing**	**Overprinted stamp**
1 *P*	Original	Kings: 1, 4, 12 *fillér*
	Reprint	Kings: 1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 18, 20, 30 *fillér*
2 *P*	Original	Kings: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18, 20, 30, 50, 80 *fillér,* 1 *Pengő* St Margaret: 20 fillér, Famous women: 80 *fillér*
	Reprint	Kings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18, 20, 30, 50, 80 *fillér*, 1 *Pengő* St Margaret: 20 fillér, Famous women: 80 *fillér*
3 *P*	Original	Kings: 4 *fillér,* 1 *Pengő* Postage dues: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 20 *fillér*
	Reprint	Kings: 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 18, 20, 30, 50, 80 *fillér*, 1 *Pengő* Postage dues: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 18, 20, 30, 36 *fillér*
5 *P*	Original	Kings: 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 18, 20, 80 *fillér*, 1 *Pengő* St Margaret: 30 fillér; Horthy: 2 *P* Postage dues: 2, 4, 8, 10, 20, 30, 36 *fillér*
	Reprint	1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 18, 20, 30, 50, 80 *fillér*, 1 *Pengő* St Margaret: 30 fillér; Horthy: 2 *Pengő* Postage dues: 2, 4, 8, 10, 18, 20, 30, 36 *fillér*
1, 2, 3, 5 *P*	Trial	Red Cross, 1 *P* on 20+20 *f*, 2 *P* on 30+30 *f*, 3 *P* on 50+50 *f*, 5 *P* on all four values

A total of 66 different stamps are known (**Table 2,** [6]), including 17 postage due stamps intended for use as regular postage stamps. However, it is now thought that, in fact, only 46 stamps received the 'original' overprint using dull black ink. The complete series of 66 stamps with shiny black ink appear to have been produced a little later, probably from the same plates, and thus might be considered to be at best reprints, and at worst forgeries, although there is some evidence that they were actually placed in circulation.

Needless to say, there are also fakes with dull black ink. If the distance between the number and 'P' is wider than 2.5 mm, the overprint is also considered to be a forgery [3, 6]. Website [3] also suggests that stamps with a pale grey ink are also from the original printing. A quick study of my copies suggests I have the 'originals' plus the extras as 'reprints'. Remarkably, this appears to tie up with Jay T. Carrigan's experience. He relates that a philatelist and surveyor, Konrad Ferenc, visited the region shortly after the stamps were in circulation, and purchased a collection of the stamps from Kis Lajos (a Nagyvarad postal official). When Konrad emigrated to Canada, he sold the collection to Geza Neumann in New York, and Jay T. Carrigan bought Neumann's collection at auction in 1980. Like mine, this collection also contains a mix of 'orginals' and 'reprints'. Table 2 lists the basic stamps that are known, divided between the 'originals' and the 'reprints'.

Many of the stamps are said to be signed on the reverse by Konrad (KF) or Kis (KL) – three of the postage due overprints in **Figure 2** have the mark KL in a circle.

Most of the knowledge that Jay T. Carrigan has acquired over the years he says has come from Konrad's 1947 catalogue, an article in the American Philatelist, and personal correspondence with Peter Nema of Switzerland and with Ratai Gabor of Sweden and later, Budapest. Nema attempted a plating study of the issue, which is reproduced in **Figure 3** (as of 1983). There are three types of the letter 'P' (although one of them may be a forgery, two types of the figure '1', five types of the figure '2', and six types each of the figures '3' and '5'. Micu [5] records a variant of the Type 4 '5' with modified corners on the left side (**Figure 4**). Ref. [6] gives a forgery guide (**Figure 5**).

The following varieties are recorded by [4] as:

No.	Value	Variety	Position
a	all?	Săjajului	2
b	all?	Large '**ş**' in '**Poşta**'	17
c	all?	Large '**a**' in '**Poşta**'	31
d	all 5 *P*?	'**P**' in Type C (although this may be forged – see Figure 3)	16
35A	3 *P* / 4 *fillér*	Postage due, inverted overprint	
44A	5 *P* / 20 *fillér*	Postage due with watermark double cross	

Unfortunately, none of the stamps I illustrate has any of these varieties, but the 2 *P* on 2 *f* has a raised 'o' in 'Poşta'. Reference [6] lists the 1 *P* overprint with a raised 'P' in 'Posta', and the 3 *P* on 5 *f* with inverted overprint. In addition, I have a 3 *P* on 18 *f* with a red overprint, which according to the above seems highly likely to be a forgery.

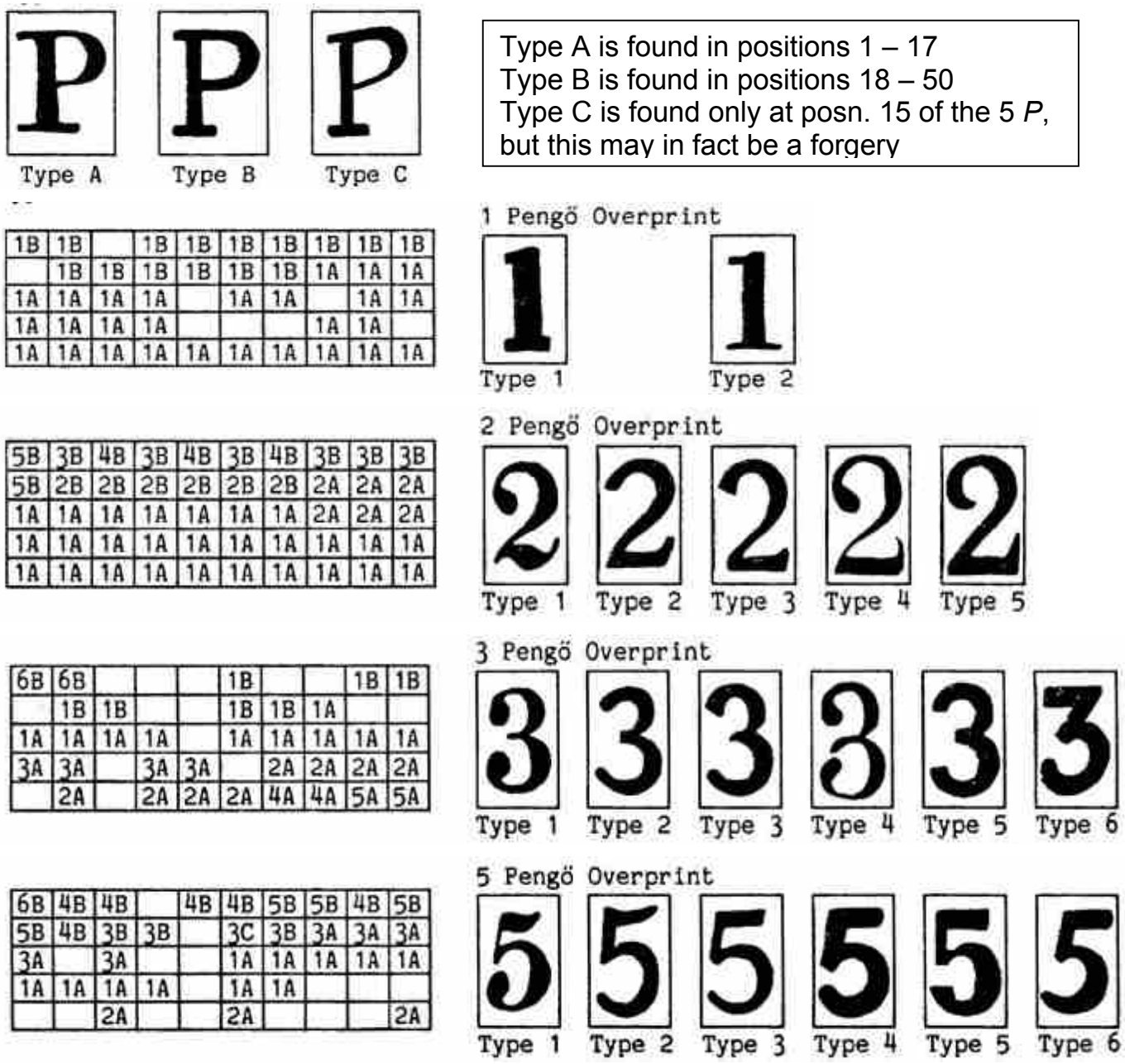
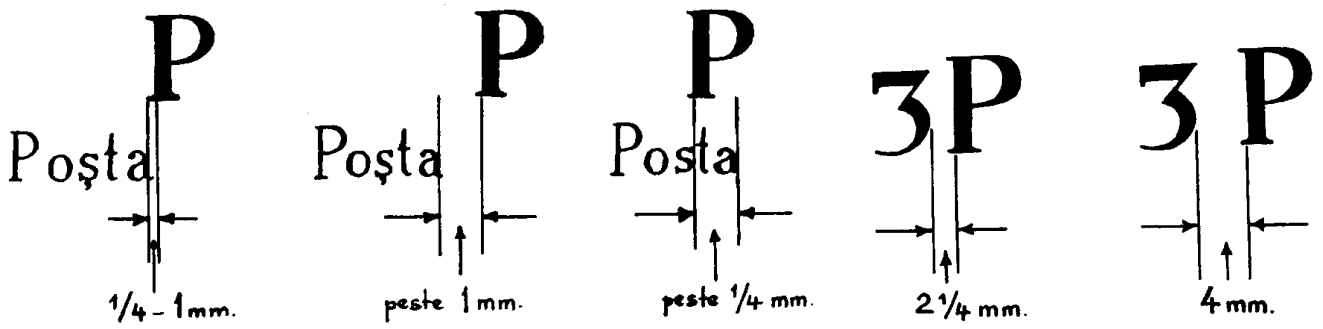


Figure 3: *The status, in 1983, of a plating study of the first issue overprint [4].*

Figure 4: *Two types of Overprint Type 4 (as recorded by Micu [5]),*



Original | Forgery | Forgery | Original | Forgery

Figure 5: *Forgery guide from reference [6].*

In addition, a trial printing was prepared on stamps of the 1944 Red Cross charity set. The 5 *P* surcharge was applied to all four Red Cross stamps, not just the top value as shown in **Figure 2**. Jay T Carrigan has literature information which suggests that only 10 each of the values that appear in Figure 2 were printed, and just one each of the remaining three 5 *P* overprints, but up to 1983, only 2 genuine copies of the 2 *P* on 30 *f* + 30 *f* and 1 of the 5 *P* on 70 *f* + 70 *f* had been recorded. Unfortunately, the copies shown in Figure 2 appear to have the shiny ink!

One item of postal stationery, an 18 *f* postcard with the 1944 printing date, is also known overprinted in a similar fashion, but because only a small number of unused cards have been found, so this might be regarded as a fantasy issue (**Figure 6**).

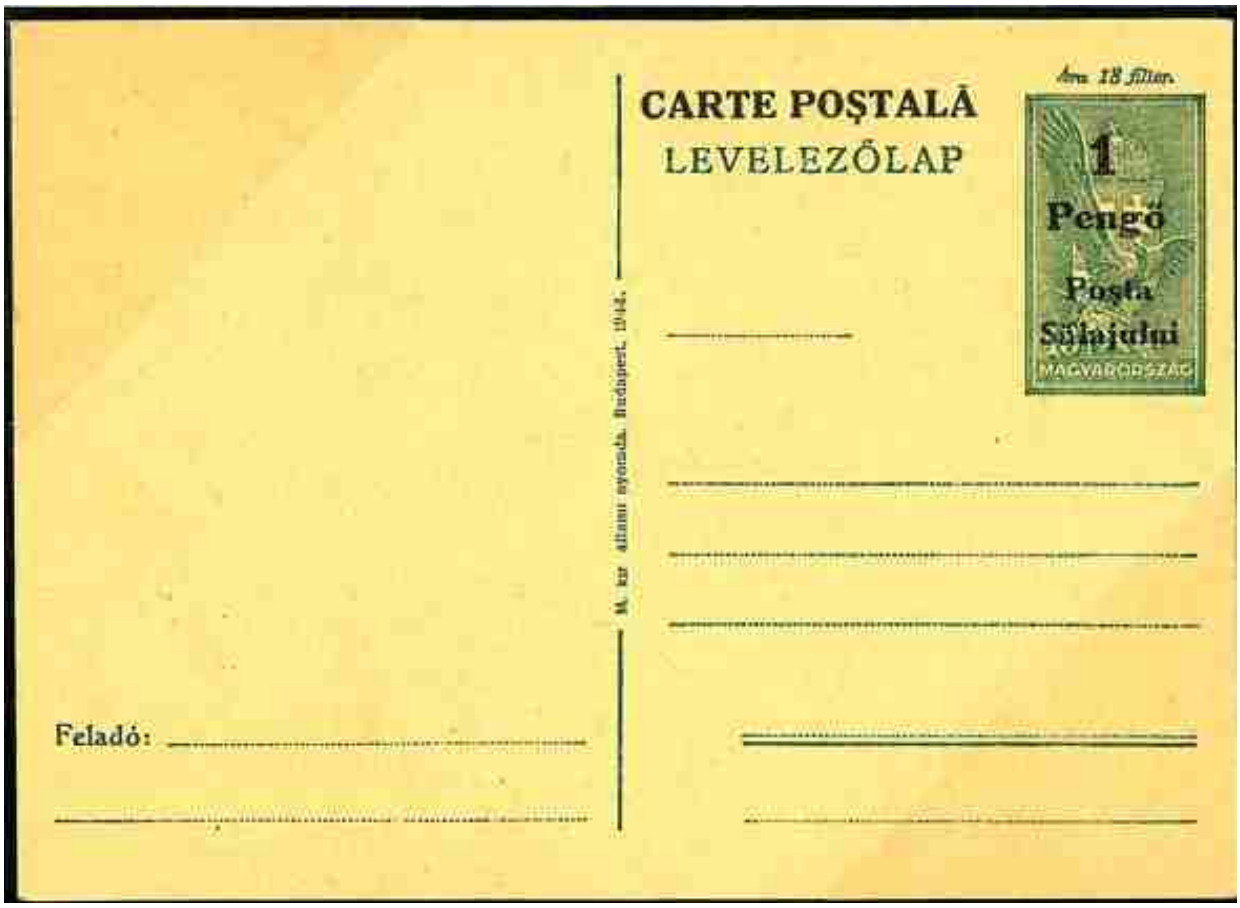


Figure 6: *An overprinted postal stationery card – a fantasy [4]?*

The Sălaj Second Issue

According to the Micu article [1], this issue was lithographed at the Seres private printing works in Zalău/Zilah and appeared on or about 9 February 1945 [3]. The order was placed by the local fiscal authorities which were under the control of the Prefecture of Sălaj County. There were three stamps prepared in Hungarian currency (**Figure 7**), which was still circulating at the time: the 50 *f* in yellow orange and the 1 *P* in blue show a postman (note the pointed hat!), and the 2 *P* in violet on yellow-orange paper showing a horse-drawn mail-coach. There is a wide variety of colour shades in all three values, and of the paper in the 2 *P* value. The perforation is rather primitive with imperfections, and examples of pairs imperforate between are met with. The total printing was 10 920 of the 50 *f*, 41 640 of the 1 *P*, and 49 900 of the 2 *P*, but when the Romanian post office took over in 1945, 1 140 of the 50 *f*, 30 180 of the 1 *P* and 37 725 of the 2 *P* were destroyed, so a little less than 1000 sets can now exist.

Figure 7: *The specially produced issue.*

Micu also reports some interesting varieties. Since the two lower values were printed in sheets with two panes of 30 stamps, pairs of stamps exist with a gutter between them. The 2 *P* value was printed in sheets of two panes of 25, but in this case the panes are head to head, which gives tête-bêche pairs with a gutter between (**Figure 8**)[1]. In addition, this stamp can be found with imperforate margins. A significant variety mentioned by Micu is on the 1 *P* value where the first stamp in the last horizontal row of the right-hand pane has a point under the letter 'S' in 'POSTA'.

Figure 8: *Gutter pairs of the 1 P and 2 P, the latter being tête-bêche.*

[1] A set of gutter pairs was offered in the Profila Auction 55, Nov. 2005, reserved at about £40 ($US 70).

Postmarks

In Zalău/Zilah, the stamps were cancelled using an old metallic money-order shaving-blade shaped canceller, using black indian ink. Examples exist with a single-line town name and date cancel in violet ink, although their authenticity is in doubt. In Simleul-Silvaniei/Szilágyiszomlyó a round rubber canceller was used with violet ink (**Figure 9**), the date sometimes being applied separately by a straight-line stamp also in violet (**Figure 10**). Forged postmarks also exist (**Figure 11**) usually in a brighter violet and with the mis-spelling 'Sivaniei'. Similar postmarks were also used in the towns of Crasna/Krasna, Jibou/Zsibó, Tăşnad/Tasnád (**Figure 12**), Supurul de Jos/Alsószopor and Cehu Silvaniei/Szilágyicseh, but with the date added by hand. In Mirşid/ Nyírsid there was no postmark, so stamps were cancelled by hand. Examples on cover are scarce because, as Micu points out, not only was there a relatively low level of use, there was also a shortage of paper, and this let to the turning of envelopes and destruction of covers before they got into collectors hands. The stamps are also recorded by [3] as being used in Nuşfalău/ Szilágynagyfalu (**Figure 13**) and Ulmeni/ Sülelmed (**Figure 14**).

References

[1] Micu, I., "Rumanian Local Posts: The second issue of Posta Salajului", *The Cinderella Philatelist*, April 1964, 24-5 (translated from *Filatelia* 1963).

[2] Miles, D., *Reference book of overprints on Hungarian stamps*, published privately, 1992.

[3] Romanian Philately website: http://www.romanianstamps.com/local/salajului.htm

[4] Jay T. Carrigan website: http://www.jaypex.com/NT/zalau1.htm and further correspondence

[5] Micu I., "'Posta Sălajului' supratipar (I)", *Filatelia* No. 9 (344) Sept. 1983, 6-7.

[6] Dragomir, K., Surpateanu A., *Catalogul Marcilor Postale Romanesti '74.*

Figure 9: *The round rubber 'cancellation' of Simleul-Silvaniei/Szilágyiszomlyó on a 2 P on 1 P stamp, the letter being addressed to Szatmárnémeti (from [4]).*

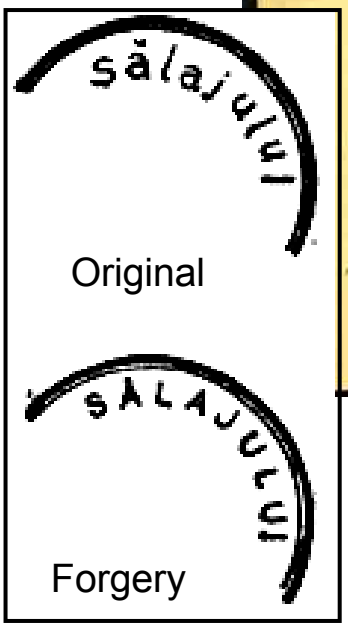


Figure 10: *Postcard sent at the 1* P *rate from Simleul-Silvaniei to Carei-Mare with a straight-line date added to the circular town cancellation (from [4]).*

Figure 11: *Forged postmark [5].*

Figure 12: *Registered cover used within Tăşnad with mixed first and second issues, probably philatelic (from [4]).*

Figure 13: *Cover sent from Nuşfalău to Kunszentmarton in Szolnok megye (from [4]).*

Figure 14: *Registered letter posted in Ulmeni/Sülelmed and addressed to Fegyvernek in Hungary with some of the second issue stamps (from [4]). This has been traced as being part of a correspondence between a displaced son and his father trying to regain contact.*